



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

LETTERS FROM A PRIVATE DUTY NURSE

I

THE NURSES' LODGE, September, 19—.

DEAREST MARY:

I thought of you so many times last month, having your holiday by the beautiful sea; and I hope you have come back much refreshed to the care of your children.

I had my vacation in July, as you know; and in August I accepted a position as resident nurse in the orphanage at Beresford. I knew I should love to work among the children again; and I hoped it would be a nice home-like place, such as you have made of Saint John's House, but oh my dear! it was forlorn and dreary and I could not bear the way they treated the children. I saw that I was not going to be able to change anything, so I came back in just ten days. I stopped by the way for some visits and reached here September 1. I find it very good to be back at the old stamping ground.

Since returning I have done some specializing at the John Alden—tiresome, inconvenient place—and at the Kaiserswerth. The latter experience I very much enjoyed. It is a nice place, everyone there is so thoughtful and considerate, and there is such a pleasant atmosphere. I never feel in the least afraid of being jumped on there. There is something dramatic, too, in the spacious corridors and the quiet, white garbed people moving about. I arrived just in time for shift, when the juniors and probationers are reporting to the head nurse. The pupils do seem to me the veriest youngsters, and I have to keep reminding myself that I was once as young, as incomplete, and as merry-hearted as they are. People are always speaking of me as over-serious, but *you* know that, though I can never escape the consciousness of the "*lachrymae rerum*," there is nothing I enjoy so much as real gaiety.

We did have such merry times at the midnight suppers—subdued merriment, to be sure, and often interrupted by a bell, but still very jolly. The first night I was sitting by my patient, who had just fallen asleep, when the little floor nurse put her head in the ward door and said softly: "Will you come to supper now?"

I followed her to the diet kitchen where the others were already gathered. There was a pot of steaming coffee, a plate of buttered toast, a dish of cream chicken and a perfectly gorgeous watermelon. We had an awfully nice time. Do you know they tell me that at the Children's there is a relief nurse, and that the floor nurses have an hour off at midnight to sit down and eat a proper meal. When you remember

how we used to eat our food standing, or sitting on the stairs to be within call of the sickest one, that seems like luxury indeed.

There is one thing that struck me as perfectly shocking, though I never thought of it in that way while I was in training, I suppose because I was chiefly occupied in getting through my work creditably. I mean waking the patients so early in the morning. The floor nurse turned up the ward lights at 5 a.m. She could not help it, for at that she barely got through her work at 7 o'clock, but it did seem like cruelty. When I get to be a superintendent I am not going to allow the morning night work to begin before 6 a.m., and I am going to have a second nurse come on duty at that hour to help. It strikes me that that would be much kinder to both the patients and the nurse. I do not believe you have forgotten yet how your back ached when you had put the ward in order for the day.

I suppose people think we nurses lead a humdrum life, but to me it is all one brave adventure. Not to know where one is going to sleep the next night certainly smacks of adventure, and surely we go about redressing human wrong, and oh! I hope it is true that we speak no evil and give ear to none.

I have just been summoned, by fate in the person of the registrar, to a new adventure. It will probably be difficult, but it is sure to be interesting, because it has to do with human folk.

Good-bye, dear, and kiss Baby Olive for me.

Your loving friend,

MARGARET RAMSAY.